

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON OPERATION OF HOPPER DREDGES  
IN THE FREEPORT HARBOR CHANNEL PROJECT

AUGUST 2003 – OCTOBER 2003

On August 11, 2003 the contract hopper dredge *Bayport* began work on the Entrance and Jetty Channels of the Freeport Harbor Project. Contract specifications required dredging an estimated 889,000 cubic yards (CY) of shoal material. The required depth of dredging was 49 feet below Mean Low Tide (MLT, Corps of Engineers Datum), with 2 feet of allowable overdepth dredging along the Entrance Channel and 47 feet MLT with 2 feet of overdepth along the Jetty Channel.

Dredging began on August 11, 2003, and was completed on October 14, 2003. A total of 532 loads of dredged material were collected and deposited into Placement Area No. 1-A. Dredging was performed between Stations 71+52 along the Jetty Channel and (-)80+00 along the Outer Bar Channel. A total of 1,650,000 CY of material were excavated from this project.

The dredge was equipped with rigid draghead turtle deflectors, and 100% inflow screening with a 4-inch square mesh. NMFS-approved turtle observers provided 24-hour/day monitoring of dragheads and screens for each load cycle. The observers were employed by Coastwise Consulting, Inc. under a subcontract to the dredging contractor, Manson Construction Co.

Relocation trawling was conducted on a 24-hour daily basis during dredging operations. A total of 6 turtles were tagged and relocated. This total includes; 4 loggerheads and 2 Kemp's ridleys. A copy of the trawling report associated with each of these captures is enclosed.

During the performance of this dredging, no lethal turtle takes were experienced. The surface water temperature ranged from 23.3°C – 30.0°C. A copy of the observer reports is enclosed.

An abundance of debris and clay caused excessive clogging of the screening aboard the dredge. Some of these screens were opened to alleviate this problem.